CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH
PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 31 July 2002, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Volker Heinsberg (Germany)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 908th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and welcome you all back from your summer break. I have six speakers on my list so far: the first is Ambassador Hans-Joachim Daerr of Germany, from the Federal Government Commission for Disarmament and Arms Control.

Mr. DAERR (Germany): Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to be here and to share with you some views of the German Government on the question, where do arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation stand today? Allow me, in dealing with this subject, to take a look slightly wider than the mandate of this Conference.

Over more than a decade now the centre of gravity of arms control, due to changing framework conditions, has steadily shifted. From improving security through a balance of power, arms race prevention and crisis stability between military blocks confronting each other, emphasis has now moved to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to arms control relevant to local conflict management.

In addition to this steady shift, as a sudden and sharp shock, the horrific events of 11 September 2001 have made us aware of the new global dimension of terrorist threat and its obvious links with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and festering local conflicts.

As a consequence, arms control and disarmament are in a permanent process of reassessment and adaptation to new challenges and changing framework conditions. Arms limitations, force ratios between alliances or single countries, mutually-assured deterrence and crisis stability have not yet become irrelevant, but preventing the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, including respective carrier systems, and, in particular, preventing them from getting into the hands of non-State-actors seems now to have become the more acute challenge.

As far as the handling of arms control is concerned, there are mainly two stumbling blocks in the way of progress at present.

One is the debate about how much can be reached by multilateral negotiation and agreement, against what should rather be tackled, possibly in a synchronized manner, by steps taken at the national level. The process of negotiating and reaching even a multilateral - let alone universal - convention, and then ensuring its reliable implementation, is certainly long and cumbersome and the result will always be less than perfect. The point, however, is whether on balance we are better off with or without this imperfect result. Even the process itself, that is, dialogue and negotiation alone, could already diminish the risk of otherwise allowing terrorists freedom of manoeuvre in what would be arms-control-free terrain. This has to be weighed, of course, against the risk of creating a false sense of security, but I certainly see a lot of room between a less than perfect result and a flawed or counterproductive one. Why should a coalition against terror, ideally as global as possible, be better off by not handling the most dangerous tools of terrorism in the same multilateral way? The obvious solution seems to me the combination of multilateral and national action.

(Mr. Daerr, Germany)

The other obstacle in the way of progress is the traditional technique of establishing linkages between matters of different maturity or of different priority to the respective negotiating parties. With all respect for the give-and-take principle, this linkage game is a recipe for slow-down and standstill even where positive results are likely. Here again one should take the on-balance approach and decide whether partial progress is not better than no progress at all.

Germany remains committed to our common goal of strengthening the existing non-proliferation regime. To this effect, we have to do everything in our power to strengthen existing multilateral instruments. One significant aspect in this context is the attempt to enhance the global standards of the mechanisms for the implementation of these instruments and to improve their verification tools. Where necessary and appropriate, the creation of new multilateral instruments to this effect should not be excluded.

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament go hand-in-hand. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation. It is also the foundation of global nuclear disarmament, as it constitutes the formal legal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to that end. Furthermore, the NPT has established a firm relation between non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Both treaty objectives are not separate goals, but can only be pursued jointly and not at each other's expense. Furthermore, negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices remain a matter of high priority.

We are cautiously optimistic that, in the course of the ongoing NPT review process, significant progress in the implementation of the NPT can be registered by the Review Conference to be held in 2005. The practical steps contained in the Final Document issued by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which was adopted by consensus, continue to be relevant benchmarks for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty.

Germany continues to advocate universal adherence to the NPT. All countries which have not yet done so remain called upon to sign and ratify the Treaty.

The focus on non-proliferation and the risk of nuclear terrorism does not mean that the stability and the strategic relationship between the nuclear-weapon States are no longer important. In this context, we welcome the treaty between the United States of America and Russia, signed by President Bush and President Putin in Moscow on 24 May this year, which reduces the number of operationally deployed strategic warheads to no more than 2,200 by the year 2012, as a substantial step towards the ultimate goal of completely eliminating these nuclear arsenals.

The inclusion of substrategic arsenals in nuclear arms control agreements is still outstanding. Substrategic arsenals so far have only been covered by the presidential nuclear initiative of 1991-1992. Not only would a significant reduction of substrategic nuclear weapons

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in a transparent and verifiable manner be of prime importance to European security, but it would also reduce risks from storage and transportation, as well as from possible terrorist attempts to gain control over these substrategic devices.

Recent reports on terrorist efforts to strive for means of explosive dissemination of radiological material, to build a so-called "dirty bomb", are alarming. This Conference should not ignore this new aspect of an old problem. Therefore, under its presidency of the Conference, Germany has suggested that the issue of radiological weapons should be revisited. Former endeavours to adopt a convention have not been successful, and with this in mind, it is not our intention to restart deliberations on the basis of a draft that is more than 10 years old. We feel it is appropriate, however, that the Conference should thoroughly discuss and examine whether further action is required.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has moved closer to universal adherence; Germany is confident that the fresh start which OPCW has made will ensure its full and balanced implementation. As a corollary, common standards of national implementation would significantly reduce the risk of the proliferation of chemical weapons material to non-State actors. Continued and timely destruction of existing chemical weapons stocks will further enhance international security. Germany, within the framework of disarmament cooperation with Russia, is making substantial and exemplary contributions to support the relevant projects.

In November this year, the resumption of the fifth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention will be another crucial item on the agenda of multilateral disarmament. Germany has spared no effort in working towards a substantial final document for the purpose of preserving the multilateral process for the strengthening of the BWC. Everybody should join such efforts in order to achieve a positive outcome of the Conference, to adopt a text that will be supported by all major actors and groups of BWC States parties. Failure this time might mean a serious setback for the Convention itself.

There is an urgent need for a multilateral instrument for curbing missile proliferation. In the recent past, various approaches to this important question have been developed. Germany, together with its partners in the European Union, has strongly supported the idea of an international code of conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. We regard the international code of conduct as the most substantive and advanced initiative in this field, without precluding more ambitious ones like the Russian proposal for a global control system. After the broad participation of interested countries in the two conferences in Paris last February and in Madrid last June, we hope for universal participation in this politically-binding instrument. Germany also participated actively in the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles.

In our view, the question of arms control in outer space is an important issue which should be addressed by the Conference in a substantive discussion. So far only weapons of mass destruction in space have been subject to an agreement. Since it is a complex matter, instead of

(Mr. Daerr, Germany)

taking an overall approach, it might be helpful to tackle it sector by sector. It remains to be seen what the outcome of such a discussion will be, especially with a view to the future treatment of this issue.

Small arms and light weapons, explosive remnants of war and landmines continue to pose a grave humanitarian problem, especially during and after regional conflicts. Despite all the welcome successes of demining, the indiscriminate killing of human beings through landmines continues. The Ottawa Convention is an important step towards the total elimination of anti-personnel mines. The fact that it has been ratified by 125 States and signed by another 17 is an encouraging success which has set standards for humanitarian international law. The Federal Government has devoted itself to the fight against all landmines that pose a threat to the civilian population and will not lessen its efforts in this field. We therefore stand ready to host the 2004 Ottawa Convention Review Conference in Germany.

The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), despite originating from a past area of block-to-block confrontation, is still meaningful and has preserved its model character for conflict prevention and stability. In a historical perspective, conventional arms control has decisively contributed - in particular through the instruments of the CFE - to creating stability in Europe and consequently, to overcoming the cold war. We therefore welcome the recent Russian notification of compliance with the flank limitations of the adapted CFE Treaty.

To conclude after this "tour d'horizon", let me come back to the agenda of this Conference.

The present stalemate regarding nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, fissile material cut-off, and negative security assurances is deplorable. All four areas are of acute relevance, and progress, even if it has to be step-by-step, seems as feasible as it is desirable. We should not forget that the limited membership in this sole international negotiating forum for disarmament brings with it a particular responsibility to the United Nations family for progress in the course of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. The Conference has a contribution to make for the solution of the problems we are facing today. Let me reiterate: Germany will spare no effort in that regard and in the same vein welcomes every initiative which would overcome the present stalemate in the conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador for his statement and now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, a few weeks ago - more specifically, during the intersessional period - a group of five ambassadors, whose delegations in the Conference on Disarmament come from different geographical regions, met to give some thought together on ways and means that would enable our forum to emerge from the stalemate in which it has languished for many months now. Prompted by pure goodwill and by their friendship, they put together an entirely informal paper, setting forth some ideas relating to essential matters on the agenda, as a rough sketch for a programme of work. Since then this paper has been in circulation; it has received comments and a range of different assessments.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

This, without doubt, is the best fate that could befall a collective and entirely disinterested initiative whose sole purpose is to restart dialogue at this crucial point in the life of the Conference on Disarmament.

Today this group of ambassadors has entrusted me with the honour of speaking on their behalf - which I do merely as first among equals - to shed light on a quest that could promote the resumption of our work, a quest which, regrettably, seems as arduous as that for the Holy Grail undertaken by the hero Parzifal of your national poet, Wolfram von Eschenbach.

We should bear in mind first of all that this initiative is set within the continuum of our efforts, over recent years, that have brought various proposals before us. This draft is in no sense a radical departure: it is a draft that has clear links with all previous proposals, as it arises from a positive process of their synthesis, the only sort of process which can help lead us to a better understanding, which can help shed light on our situation, which can help translate our expectations and our concerns - in a word - which can help focus both the letter and the spirit that should inform the future framework for our work.

Second, we should also bear in mind that this initiative cannot claim to offer either a definite text or one - and I stress this - subject to any specific conditions. By its very nature, the text that is being circulated seeks to be corrected, amended and supplemented by all delegations, so that ultimately it can evolve and be subject to substantive and formal amendments that will turn it into a text chosen by all and for all.

In this process of pursuing contacts and seeking explanations, we followed the logical approach and started work on the draft, at the outset, with you, Mr. President, who have the onerous task of guiding our Conference at this precise time, of steering this boat in its encouraging progress toward the clear blue horizons of collective creativity. You shared your feelings with us, you gave us some advice, you commented on the ideas that had been developed and it is in this direction that we must now press forward.

The group of five ambassadors has since received very useful written proposals for amendments. The group hopes that this process of correction and amendment will gather as much momentum as possible over the 10 days to come, so that an amended and revised version of the initial preliminary draft can be decided upon and circulated to all members before the end of this month, that is, before the end of August. In this connection, we would like to receive contributions in writing, so that these may be incorporated in the revised version.

Ms. INOGUCHI (Japan): At the outset, Mr. President, let me express my pleasure in seeing you back in full strength after a refreshing one-month break. I would like to reaffirm the intention of my delegation to extend to you our full support and cooperation during your term of office. I would also like to reiterate my appreciation to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, and to the secretariat of the Conference for their support and assistance at this critical juncture.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

The Conference on Disarmament continues to face a stalemate. Our common efforts to bring it out of this impasse must continue. In his statement during the last plenary meeting, Ambassador Javits of the United States of America encouraged all members to keep a clear focus on this challenge over the break. As he pointed out, an untiring commitment is needed in this regard.

The Conference has just heard, from Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, of the initiative taken by the five distinguished ambassadors.

The initiative provides us with a historic opportunity to begin substantive work on the four key issues of greatest importance to many member States, namely, negative security assurances, nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. While the Japanese delegation is willing to participate actively in deliberations on the other three issues, it considers that negotiations on an FMCT are of paramount importance. Japan believes that an FMCT would contribute significantly to nuclear non-proliferation and constitute an essential building block for nuclear disarmament. Japan is eager to see the beginning of negotiations on such a treaty - it is something which we have long awaited.

A significant feature of this initiative is that it has emerged from a cross-regional group of middle Powers strongly interested in disarmament. Such a group is in a better position to identify the collective will of the international community on disarmament, overarching a difference of interests. Of no less importance, however, is the momentum created by the major Powers. The May 2002 agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on strategic offensive warhead reductions has led to a favourable atmosphere in the Conference as well. In fact, during the second part of the Conference's current session, the different positions regarding the programme of work of all major countries - including China, thanks to the efforts of its distinguished ambassador - became significantly closer. Disarmament requires a harmonious combination of initiatives from various countries, which can result in significant progress. Thus, this initiative offers a real opportunity for the Conference on Disarmament further to narrow the remaining gaps and finally to achieve a much needed breakthrough.

Another advantage is that this initiative will enable the Conference on Disarmament to pursue its endeavours in a continuous manner. I highly appreciate the aim, under this initiative, that the work of the Conference should be sustained at least for the duration of the 2002 and 2003 sessions.

In addition to this basic appraisal, I would like to offer three modest suggestions as contributions to the initiative for the consideration of all delegations here.

First, my delegation understands the general idea and the philosophy on the method of work of the Conference, expressed in the initiative. This idea would seem to be self-evident, when viewed in terms of the history of the Conference on Disarmament, which has successfully negotiated disarmament instruments by adopting a method of work based on converging points

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

agreed by all. In this manner, the Conference on Disarmament has the full potential to promote international peace and security, respecting the principle of undiminished security for all. Yet to articulate this idea in a text requires careful consideration if unnecessary confusion is to be avoided. And I will be willing to help the five ambassadors with the wording, if necessary.

Second, with regard to the mandate on an FMCT, my delegation believes that the report of the special coordinator, contained in document CD/1299, and the mandate contained therein present the only realistic approach to the launching of negotiations on a treaty of such significance, with unresolved issues remaining as stated in the aforementioned report. The formulation agreed twice, both in 1995 and in 1998, should be viewed in that light.

Third, while appreciating the sustainability of the work contained in the initiative, I am also aware that article 28 of the rules of procedure needs to be amended in order to settle this question permanently. My delegation essentially supports the idea of amending this article, thereby facilitating the Conference's continuation of its substantial work. In view of the differences among all delegations concerning this matter, however, overloading the decision by seeking an amendment of the rules of procedure should probably be avoided. In my view, given the special circumstances which have placed the Conference on Disarmament in a stalemate for nearly six years, it would be better for the five ambassadors simply to state that the decision on the programme of work on this occasion is taken notwithstanding article 28 of the rules of procedure.

My delegation understands that this initiative is still evolving. With this understanding, I would like to give assurances of my full support and express my utmost appreciation to the five ambassadors for their sincere and diligent efforts to bring the current stalemate to an end. Let me remind all present in this room that citizens all over the world are watching us, ardently wishing to live in a safer international environment. In this light, it is imperative that the Conference seizes this present opportunity to respond to their collective wishes by resuming its meaningful work, by promoting international peace and security. Finally, Mr. President, let me reiterate my complete faith in the direction you have chosen in guiding us toward fulfilling our responsibilities.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the ambassador for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Chung.

Mr. CHUNG (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, let me take the opportunity of my first statement under your presidency to congratulate you on your assumption of the office at this important juncture. I am confident that your leadership and rich experience in disarmament forums will guide us to a productive outcome in the Conference. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

(Mr. Chung, Republic of Korea)

I also wish to extend my appreciation to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, and to the other able members of the secretariat for their contribution to our work. We hope that such efficient management of the Conference by the secretariat will continue to help this body revitalize its work.

Since the Conference on Disarmament opened its first session of this year last January, I have listened with great seriousness and appreciation to all the statements made by distinguished colleagues and by other high-level speakers. Different speakers have provided us with various perspectives on a broad range of issues of our common concern. Whatever the differences between them, I could detect certain commonalities cutting across these statements. Among other things, there is a widely shared belief that the global security environment is undergoing major changes as a result of recent events, most notably the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States and the significant United States-Russian agreements to reduce offensive nuclear weapons and to work out a new strategic framework for the twenty-first century.

Another point is that, under these circumstances, multilateralism, rather than falling into disrepute, has been reaffirmed as a core principle of disarmament and non-proliferation. It appears that the right way to address the challenges that we have faced since last September is through political solidarity and international coalition. This belief is confirmed by the determination manifested in United Nations resolution 56/24T, on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism.

Multilateral efforts should go hand-in-hand with bilateral, regional and plurilateral efforts. In April this year, we witnessed progress in the modest outcome of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference and, on 27 June, in the agreement by leaders of the G8 launching the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists. We welcome the development in nuclear disarmament with the signing of the Treaty of Moscow by Russia and the United States in May this year, and are also encouraged by high-level talks between China and the United States to strengthen the constructive and cooperative relations between the two countries. My delegation hopes that all these developments will provide renewed momentum for multilateral disarmament negotiations, particularly in this Conference.

Notwithstanding these positive signs, our mindset still needs to adapt further to the evolving global security environment. The Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, is being urged to break free from its prolonged impasse and to start its substantive work with a renewed sense of urgency. In this regard, I would like to extend my appreciation to you and your predecessors, as well as other representatives, for the strenuous efforts that you have all made over the past years to break the deadlock in the Conference's work programme.

(Mr. Chung, Republic of Korea)

Today, we stand at a critical moment when similar leadership and collective will are desperately needed to make the world safer from the real threat of weapons of mass destruction, including anthrax and dirty bombs, and to reduce the danger of proliferation not only to States of concern but also to non-State actors. Here in the Conference on Disarmament, we have a full agenda to enable us to address our concerns, including nuclear disarmament, FMCT, PAROS, and negative security assurances. Furthermore, we have the best available option in the Amorim proposal, as contained in CD/1624, which is the culmination of painstaking work to prepare agreements with flexibility and strategic ambiguity. We thus support the Amorim proposal as the basis upon which we can reach consensus on a work programme. The task remaining before us is to get out of this zero-sum mentality and instead to exercise political will and a spirit of compromise so that we may move the process forward.

Such efforts have been reflected well in many realistic proposals brought forward on the programme of work and the views expressed in most of the previous statements made by fellow representatives. We also share the views expressed by several ambassadors who stressed that every issue should be dealt with independently, without linkages to other issues.

FMCT negotiations are undoubtedly the next logical step we have to pursue as a matter of top priority. This is particularly so in view of the mandate we have already agreed upon and the commitment we made during the 2000 NPT Review Conference and in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation fully supports and encourages constructive efforts to facilitate the early start of negotiations on FMCT. In this context, we appreciate South Africa's substantive working paper on the fissile material treaty, circulated on 28 May in document CD/1671 and we extend our thanks to the Netherlands for having hosted an open-ended informal meeting on 7 June.

Despite the different views that persist on the mandate of PAROS, the differences seem to have become narrower and more countries have begun to demonstrate their political will to resolve the issue. We will therefore welcome any proposals or initiatives which could contribute to consensus on the programme of work. In this regard, my delegation also appreciates the most recent proposal put forward by the group of five distinguished ambassadors. To reach a final agreement on the work programme, however, it will require all member States to show further flexibility and wisdom for the common objective of international peace.

The Republic of Korea, given its unique geopolitical security environment and the long-standing threat of weapons of mass destruction that has hung over it, has been, and will continue to be, unreservedly committed to the cause of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. This unflinching commitment is demonstrated by the fact that it has ratified all treaties on weapons of mass destruction, such as the NPT, the BWC, the CWC, and the CTBT. My country is now expediting the domestic procedure required for ratifying the IAEA Additional Protocol and, as a member of several important export-control arrangements, including the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Australia Group, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, we are doing our part to reinforce global non-proliferation efforts.

(Mr. Chung, Republic of Korea)

in this regard, we support the continuing efforts of countries within and outside the MTCR to adopt the international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation in a transparent and constructive manner, and we will host the plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in Korea in May 2003. In addition, since the tragic incident of 11 September, we have continuously worked to strengthen various anti-terrorist measures by joining in the global efforts against terrorism.

Mr. President, I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to delegations for entrusting me with the important task of serving as the special coordinator on the review of the agenda. Even though coordination on procedural issues can be no substitute for substantive work, I have concluded useful bilateral and small group consultations with the full support of delegations. I hope to submit a report on the outcome of my consultations concerning the review of the agenda during the last few months before the end of August.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of South Africa, Mr. Tom Markram.

Mr. MARKRAM (South Africa): Mr. President, I would like first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. My delegation will of course continue to lend you its full support and continued cooperation.

I have asked for the floor today to voice South Africa's support for the Chinese and Russian Federation initiative on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in the form of a working paper introduced on 27 June. South Africa regards the prevention of an arms race as one of the priority issues in the field of international peace and security. We therefore welcome this timely initiative and support the general thrust and content of the working paper. It was pointed out in the introductory remarks on the paper that it had been decided to refrain from making amendments based on comments and observations that had been made during the earlier briefing at the Chinese mission. We had specific comments on that occasion, particularly concerning the conditionality in the entry into force clause, and we hope that we will be able to elaborate further upon them in an ad hoc committee setting.

South Africa introduced a working paper on the possible scope and requirements of a fissile materials treaty on 23 May and this was circulated as document CD/1671. I have requested in a letter to our Secretary-General that an addendum to that document be circulated, outlining our proposal in a diagram format. It is trusted that it may assist delegations in visualizing how that process should work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Malaysia, Mr. Raja Reza.

Mr. RAJA REZA (Malaysia): Mr. President, on behalf of the Malaysian delegation, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We assure you of our full cooperation during the German presidency. It is our hope that, under your able leadership and guidance, the Conference will be able to commence its substantive work as soon as possible.

Malaysia welcomes the working paper jointly submitted by the delegations of China and the Russian Federation on 27 June 2002, entitled "Possible elements for a future international legal agreement on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects", and circulated in document CD/1679. Malaysia supports this proposal, which aims to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects. Malaysia believes that an arms race in outer space should be prevented through a legally-binding instrument and that the peaceful use of outer space should be guaranteed.

Outer space is the common heritage of mankind. It should be explored and utilized for peaceful purposes. The exploitation of outer space should be to the benefit of humankind.

The development and testing of weapon systems in outer space and the use of space systems for military purposes are matters of deep concern to Malaysia. We feel that, if left unchecked, this intensification of military activities could trigger an arms race in outer space. Outer space should not be allowed to become an arena for military confrontation.

Although there are several legal agreements related to outer space, including the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, these are insufficient, especially under presentday conditions. In this context, Malaysia believes that only a legal instrument prohibiting the deployment of weapons in outer space and the prevention of the threat or use of force against outer space objects can eliminate the emerging threat of the weaponization of outer space.

As the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament issues, the Conference on Disarmament is the most appropriate forum to negotiate such a treaty. General Assembly resolution 56/23 reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

In this regard, Malaysia supports the early establishment of an ad hoc committee on PAROS. The Conference on Disarmament has examined a number of important issues pertaining to the prevention of an arms race in outer space through the Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS, established by the Conference from 1985-1994. Since 1995, however, the Conference has not been able to re-establish this Ad Hoc Committee, owing to a lack of agreement on its mandate.

(Mr. Raja Reza, Malaysia)

Malaysia wishes to call upon all States, particularly those with advanced space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties, for the sake of maintaining international peace and security.

Concerning the proposed treaty, Malaysia is of the view that the elements of cooperation and assistance for peaceful uses should be among its salient features. It is suggested that, as a further confidence-building measure, there should be a moratorium on the testing of all kinds of weapons and on the deployment of weapons in outer space.

The joint working paper submitted by the delegations of China and the Russian Federation provides a very useful outline of some possible elements of an international legal agreement on PAROS. We wish to thank both delegations for their initiative, which would contribute to our efforts to develop a treaty preventing the deployment of weapons and an arms race in outer space. The concept of maintaining outer space as a weapon-free environment, which is supported by the majority of States, should be recognized as an area of prime multilateral importance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Although that concludes my list of speakers for today, I see that the distinguished representative of Iran has asked for the floor.

Mr. SOLTANIEH (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, may I express the appreciation of my delegation for your competent chairmanship and the hope that, under your presidency, we will be able to start substantive discussions and relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament soon.

With regard to the initiative put forward by five distinguished ambassadors, introduced by our distinguished friend, Ambassador Dembri, I would like at this stage to make a very preliminary comment while we wait for instructions from our capital. We have noticed some positive points in the proposal and believe that it merits very careful consideration. We also consider the attempt very positive, an attempt at breaking the present stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and, we hope, reactivating this body once again. We consider the attempt positive in that it moves in the direction of giving due consideration to the concerns expressed by some delegates regarding previous proposals. We hope that we will proceed in the right direction. At a later stage, my delegation will of course be in a position to give its detailed comments either directly to the distinguished proponents of the proposal or here in the Conference itself.

The PRESIDENT. I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and the kind words to the Chair. The distinguished representative of Belarus has asked for the floor.

Mr. MALEVICH (Belarus) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all I would like once again to assure you of the support of the Belarusian delegation for your efforts in this very difficult time for the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your presidency of this distinguished forum.

Unfortunately, since our delegation has not received the text of the initiative put forward by the five ambassadors, I cannot at this point make any comments, except perhaps for the following. Any initiative which aims to lead us out of this impasse deserves the highest praise and the closest attention from all participants in the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like also to take this opportunity to inform participants in the Conference that, in order to ensure compliance by Belarus with the OSCE document on small arms and light weapons, adopted on 24 November 2000 at the 308th plenary meeting of the OSCE forum for Security and Cooperation, on 15 July 2002 the President of the Republic of Belarus signed a decree on compliance by the Republic of Belarus with the international obligations deriving from the OSCE document on small arms and light weapons. That decree stipulates the bodies responsible for implementation of this document and establishes the procedure for the preparation and presentation of information on light firearms to other OSCE States parties. Adoption of that decree fully will make possible full compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the OSCE document on light firearms and affords one more example of the consistent policy of our country aimed at strengthening international and European security through compliance with measures in the area of arms control.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement and for the kind words to the Chair. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor? That would seem not the case and our list of speakers for today is therefore concluded.

As I have no more speakers, I would like to make some remarks on behalf of the presidency. Since our last plenary on 27 June, the German presidency has held various consultations, both here in Geneva and at the level of Governments, with the aim of bringing us nearer to common ground on the so-called "four issues".

I would like to reiterate on this occasion what I said in my opening remarks on 27 June. We need more movement in positions, if there really is a wish to reach common ground. I would also like to reiterate that the German presidency, both here in Geneva and at the government level, will continue to make every effort to bring the Conference on Disarmament back to substantive work.

In that regard, in my opening remarks on 27 June, I also appealed to delegations to come up with ideas and proposals. Against that background and in this spirit - and also, as President of the Conference, without taking a position on the substance - I welcome the information given us by Ambassador Dembri today of an initiative by five of our distinguished colleagues.

(The President)

As just underlined by Ambassador Daerr in his statement, the German presidency of the Conference on Disarmament has suggested that the issue of radiological weapons should be revisited. I would like to add that, bearing in mind that former endeavours to adopt a convention have not been successful, it is not the intention of the German presidency to restart deliberations on the basis of a more than 10-year-old draft. We do feel, however, that it is appropriate for the Conference to deal with this important issue.

To this end, we propose that the Conference examine whether additional endeavours are required to detect and, where necessary and appropriate, to fill possible gaps in the international legal framework. Germany believes that the prospects of such weapons falling into the hands of non-State actors justify the resubmission of this issue to this forum. In my statement on 27 June, I announced that it was my intention to hold open-ended informal consultations on that issue. I invite interested delegations to open-ended informal consultations to discuss the way forward on the issue of radiological weapons after our next plenary next week on Thursday, 8 August. I will circulate a discussion paper in advance, through the secretariat.

Does any delegation now wish to take the floor? That seems not to be the case. This therefore concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 8 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.